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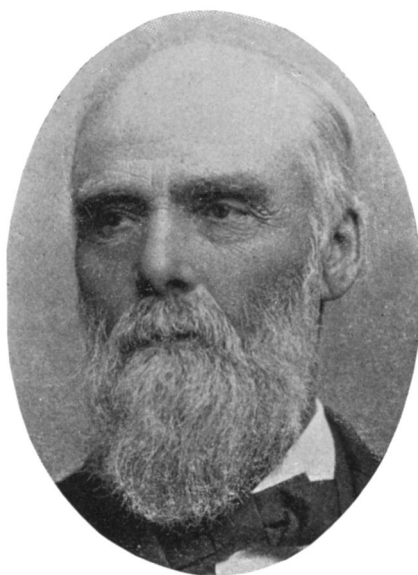
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**LEWIS STEWARD.**

## HONORABLE LEWIS STEWARD.

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FORMER MEMBER CONGRESS EIGHTH ILLINOIS DISTRICT AND  
FORMER NOMINEE FOR GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS.

By Avery N. Beebe.

Lewis Steward was born in Wayne county, Pa., near the present city of Scranton, Nov. 20, 1824. He was a lineal descendant on his mother's side of John Rogers, the martyr, and was of revolutionary stock on his father's side. His father, Marcus Aurelius Steward, was a native of Connecticut, and died in 1872, at Plano. Lewis was the eldest of seven children, five of whom were boys, two now deceased and the others all in active business life, and men of high character and ability. Lewis learned his alphabet before he was twenty months old, and attended school in a log school house one mile from his home, before he was four years of age. A woman once met him alone on his way to school and carried him back to his home, being unable to believe that he was out with the consent of his parents while so young.

He acquired very little schooling previous to the removal of his parents to Illinois, thirteen years after his birth, being compelled to work in the house at knitting, sewing, and cooking, while very young, and afterwards kept at work in the fields, plowing, etc. His grandfather was an associate of Daboll, author of the once popular arithmetic, and once beat the author in a contest of figures. Mathematics came easy to all of his descendants, Lewis being at home in any branch of that intricate science.

In 1838 the Steward family moved to Illinois, where the father bought a claim of David Matlock. The claim covered much of the present site of the city of Plano and included a portion of the magnificent farm and park now owned and occupied by sons of Lewis. It was on this farm that the wheat was raised which Mr. Steward helped to stack and haul to Chicago, and which, he said, in his speech before the Cheap Transportation Convention at Chicago, in December, 1875, was the first wheat that left the Chicago market for the east. Mr. Steward worked on his father's farm and in his saw mill, after coming to Illinois, until he was twenty-one years of age; attended school but a few months; became, however, very proficient in the common branches, then taught, having mastered Daboll's arithmetic in two months at the age of fifteen years. He mastered surveying, geometry, trigonometry and other branches of science without an instructor, while working in his father's saw mill.

At the age of seventeen he commenced the study of law, upon the earnest solicitation of the late Judge Helm, and became thoroughly conversant with the entire course of study, while running the saw mill, Judge Helm furnishing him the books. He was afterwards admitted to the bar of Illinois, but never entered upon the active practice of his profession, except when a friend would solicit him to help him out of trouble. He always appeared for the defense, always succeeded in winning his case, but never charged for his services. It has been said frequently by the best lawyers he came in contact with, that he would have stood in the front rank of the ablest members of the bar, in this State, had he made the practice of law a life work. The Sycamore True Republican once said of him that "he was one of the first men in the State, having the brains of a philosopher and the energy of a steam engine."

Mr. Steward was a Democrat previous to the Rebellion, but he entered into the prosecution of the war with great

vigor and earnestness. He was ready to assist in the equipment of soldiers with his practical advice and his means, and he has no more earnest friends in this country now than the soldier boys.

In 1862 he was appointed drafting commissioner for Kendall county by Governor Yates. He was elected supervisor from his town as often as he could be induced to accept, although the Republicans had a majority of over four to one from that township—he had been importuned for years to stand as a candidate for the Legislature and Congress, but would not consent to be a candidate, though his election was assured.

He was preëminently one of the people in all of his sympathies, acts and aspirations. His nominations came to him unsolicited and in spite of the politicians, not one of whom worked to bring it about. If elected, he was determined to go into office untrammelled and free to carry out just such measures as would best serve the interests of the masses. While he was connected with the manufacture of the Marsh Harvester he always tried to do away with that which stood between the manufacturer and farmer and to sell direct to the latter, from the shops, and at great saving to the purchasers. While he had a controlling interest in the Plano shops he sold machines \$50.00 less than others, and would almost make a new machine, by repairs on an old one, without extra charge.

Mr. Steward's connection with the railroads is fully explained in his interview published in the Chicago Times of February 21, 1876, and the pamphlet to which he therein refers, being an outline of a movement entirely in the interest of producer and consumer and opposed to the present railroads' monopolies.

Mr. Steward stood above reproach among his neighbors and acquaintances without respect to politics or religion.

The following incident portrays his practical methods and straightforwardness:

“A poor man who had a large family broke his leg, and, as he would be for some time unable to go to church, it was proposed to hold a prayer meeting at his house. The meeting was led by Deacon Brown. A loud knock at the door interrupted the service. A tall, lank, blue frocked youngster stood at the door with an ox-goad in his hand, and asked to see Deacon Brown. ‘Father could not attend this meetin,’ he said, ‘but he sent his prayers, and they are out here in this cart.’ They were brought in and proved to be potatoes, beef, pork and corn and other substantial necessities.”

From the Western Rural:

“HON. LEWIS STEWARD.

THE FARMER CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR.

HE MAKES A SPEECH THAT SHAKES UP THE CHICAGO GRAIN GAMBLERS.”

“Hon. Lewis Steward, of Plano, Illinois, delivered a speech in the Chicago Transportation Convention, held not long ago, that shook up the dry bones of Chicago and the members of the Board of Trade, to such an extent that it was suppressed in all the papers; but the Western Rural would not down and gave it to the public. The Rural folds presented a memorial from the producing classes, showing the enormous charges for handling grain, and other matters of complaint. The memorial raised a storm of excitement, when a member of the convention, who is now president of the Board of Trade, moved that the memorial be thrown under the table, as it was an infamous lie. Mr. Irus Coy, of Chicago, defended the memorial in a telling speech, and called upon Steward, at its conclusion, who had more experience in agricultural pursuits than any other man in the State, (as his speech will verify) to answer. The excitement here

was at its height. "Steward! Steward!" was all that could be heard. Finally he was forced to come on the platform, a place that no one had occupied except Governor Beveridge, as all other speakers spoke from their places. Mr. Steward, in his plain, unassuming, but energetic and logical way, soon riveted the attention of his audience, and was cheered and congratulated by all on the conclusion of his remarks. He said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Convention:

I am no speech-maker, as you will find by listening a very few minutes, and I do not understand why I should be called upon when there are so many present much more capable of handling the subject than myself. But when I see the only communication presented to this body from the class to which I am proud to belong branded as a lie, and a proposition made to throw it under the table, and knowing as I do that some of the statements made therein which have been pointed out as lies, are true, I feel like saying what I can in defense of this communication, and ask for it at the hands of this convention a careful consideration.

I helped to harvest and deliver to this city some of the first grain that ever went into the hold of a vessel in this harbor. I have carried grain up a long flight of stairs on my back and poured it in on top of a high bin. I well remember the first spout introduced into the side of a building through which we would empty our grain into a weighing hopper. I remember the first horse elevator erected in this city, the first introduction of steam elevators for handling grain from wagons; then the erection of a huge elevator for receiving grain from cars and delivering it aboard vessels in the river, each and every one of which I hailed with joy.

I have hauled as nice winter wheat as God every allowed to grow upon our prairies, fifty-five miles to this city upon a wagon, and sold it for thirty-eight cents per bushel, and delivered it by packing it up stairs in the

manner mentioned, thereby gaining, I think, a realizing sense of what constitutes cheap production and transportation.

I saw with delight the first train of cars ever run out of this city, and commenced to use the railroad as soon as ten miles were completed, and continued to do so by unloading grain from our wagons into cars in sacks, until the car reached our place, when we erected grain elevators for raising it from wagons and delivering on trucks in car-loads in bulk. We then adopted at once and continued to use every facility for transporting and handling grain, from the establishing of the Chicago grain market until the present time, and ought, and believe we do know what the usual charges are for getting a car of grain through this city in the usual way. I have never been a faultfinder and don't wish to be considered a "party with a grievance," and while I believe a majority of the members of the board of trade and middlemen of this city to be honorable men, and men with whom I would trust all the grain I ever grew, expecting they would dispose of it to the best advantage and account to me for every dollar, yet there are some facts connected with the transfer of grain through the city which we can not ignore, and think ought not to exist. When the first steam elevator for receiving grain from cars was erected, they commenced handling and storing grain for about one-half the present price, and in making a careful test with 10,000 bushels of corn, our shortage was but eleven bushels. Since the combination made the advance of charges, we find by the same test a shortage of over one hundred bushels. I had occasion to receive through this city a car of white winter wheat last week, for milling purposes, and I found it over eight bushels short; I received about the same time a car load from Nebraska, and found it only one bushel short.

As to the charges of twenty dollars per car named in the memorial, I hold in my hand the figures in detail,

which I have verified by comparison with the books of some of the oldest commission men in the city. I find:

Elevator charges for receiving and delivering	
on board vessels or cars, per car load.....	\$8.00
Commission, buying by car load.....	5.00
Commission, selling by car load.....	4.00
Storage, average 16 days above first twenty.....	4.00
Inspection in and out.....	.55
Insurance average .....	.30

Shrinkage, which is inevitable—as grain never increased in quantity after it leaves the field—and without charging any wastage or stealage upon any one, I estimate it at not less than 25 cents per 100 bushels, or \$1.00 for the car load, making a total amount of \$10.85, which I am satisfied is below rather than above the average.

Now I do not wish to charge any particular blame upon any men or set of men for all this. Yet when we see grain carried in vessels from this harbor to Buffalo, a distance of 1,000 miles, for two cents per bushel, may we not ask if it can not be got from the cars to the vessels, a distance of 300 feet for less than 5 cents?

While I admit the language of the memorial may be somewhat intemperate, yet may we not find, looking at it from their standpoint, a sufficient excuse for emphasis? They are those men who are not well versed in the technical language of trade and commerce and know but little of the meaning of “fresh receipts,” “free on board,” “seller the month,” “buyer the year,” “puts,” “calls,” “options,” etc., but they maintain and use a system of free schools, help to sustain and read newspapers, and know that beneath all this is some real gain which requires patient toil to produce and much labor to handle and transport, and they learn by these same sources what I chanced to see with my own eyes but a short time since. Happening to be in New England but a few weeks ago I saw laboring men buy corn at \$1.50

per bushel to make bread for their children, while last week I was in Nebraska and sat by a corn fire, because it was cheaper than coal, being worth but fifteen cents per bushel at the station. These men read and reflect upon these things and draw their own conclusions. They feel that their occupation is chosen by the favor of God; that they should not feel ashamed of it and that they are entitled to a fair compensation—and I can't help but think that the agriculturist, especially with his feet in the virgin soil of broad prairies, the blue canopy of heaven over him, and the free winds whispering around him, is a little nearer his God, and has a better opportunity for thought and reflection than any other class who may seem to know more but really think less.

We are not here to take care of these men of the board of trade, as they are abundantly able to take care of themselves any and everywhere. We are not here to take care of ourselves. Those I see around me need no assistance from any one, perhaps, but it seems to me that the men who plow the ground, furrow by furrow, plant and till the corn row by row, through the summer's heat, husk it ear by ear, often with bloody fingers, put it in the crib, shell it sometimes by hand, or with wife and children to turn the sheller, haul it to the station, a distance of many miles—and all for thirteen cents per bushel—have a right to ask of this convention in their own language, why these things are so.

Senator Shelby M. Cullom had the fight of his life in 1876 when Mr. Steward ran against him for Governor. The latter had refused to be bled for any campaign fund, and The Chicago Times had drawn on him for large sums, but it was contrary to Mr. Steward's policy. He had avowed that if the people selected him for any political station, he would not be hampered with ante-election pledges, and the usual 30,000 to 50,000 Republican majority was cut to less than 4,000 majority for Governor Cullom.

During Mr. Steward's term in Congress a discussion arose as to the expense of public printing. Some member asked him if he were satisfied. He replied, "Yes, we have spent twelve hundred dollars today to save sixty dollars; a fair sample of Legislative economy."

Mr. Steward was forceful and aggressive, with strong mental grasp and quick in determination, and though he was not connected with any church organization, he believed in practicing what he preached. He was a liberal giver for all church, school, and other public enterprises, and usually told the solicitors to put him down for a tenth of the total cost. He frequently entertained the boys and girls of his home city by free tickets to all the menageries, circuses and shows that exhibited, and would furnish conveyances to take them to neighboring towns.

Mr. Steward could not be regarded as a politician, and though he was a Democrat, he refused to contribute at the behest of the politicians when named as a candidate, and declared that if elected he would assume official duties unhampered by ante-election pledges.

Mr. Steward was first married in 1848 to Cornelia Gale. One son only was born to them, Lee, born in 1855, an unusually promising boy who was finally sent to Vienna, Austria, to complete his education; the mother died in 1858.

Mr. Steward was again married in 1860 to Mary L., daughter of Reuben and Emeline Hunt. Seven children were born to them: Ruth, Julian Rumsey, H. Greeley, W. Deering, George S., C. Marsh, and T. Coulter, three of them, Ruth, Greeley, and Coulter being deceased. Mrs. Steward still survives her husband.

He accumulated a handsome fortune, being at the time of his demise, August 27, 1896, the owner of forty large farms in Kendall county.